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One Day at a Time: You Are Not Alone

After a traumatic event one’s life will forever be changed. Just like it did in the Netflix original documentary, *Audrie and Daisy,* directed by Bonnie Cohen and Jon Shenk, released on September 23, 2016. This documentary shares the stories of multiple survivors of rape, but specifically goes into detail about two young girls named Audrie 

and the other named Daisy,

 

who were both raped after a night out in separate small towns, miles apart. The first case presented lead down a darker route because it ended with the young 14-year-old girl committing suicide only eight day after her assault. The purpose of this documentary was to get the word out about how suicide is never the answer, specifically stating how more is needed to be done for these young girls instead of only casting blame on directly on them. The directors sat down and conducted interviews with the victims’ friends, family, and others that were personally involved to gather and set the stage for this documentary. The directors effectively pulled on viewers’ emotions by using pathos, the directors’ are personally motivated in hopes to find justice for these two girls when no one else did. Cohen and Shenk want other survivors to know that they are never alone and that there are others facing the same experiences and challenges as they are and they are here to help by showing survivors that they have a voice and they should not be affair to use that voice to their advantage to get their story out. By sharing their stories, they are not allowing it to take control of them, instead they are taking back control by speaking out about what happened to them.



At the start of the documentary, a woman is talking to a teenage boy. Since he was still a minor during the time of the interviews she starts off by telling him that his name, as well as, his face is going to be altered to protect his identity. The first incident presented involved a young girl named Audrie Pott’s, she was at the age of 14, living in Saratoga California. One night her and a friend decided that they wanted to throw a party. At her party Audrie became very intoxicated and was carried on someone’s shoulders to a room up the stairs. Behind closed doors four young boys draw on her naked body and then sexually assaulted her. 

Around that same time a young girl named Daisy Coleman, age 13, in Maryville Tennessee, was also raped by one of her older brother’s close friends and then left to freeze to death in her front yard. Both of these girls share an awfully similar story about being sexually assaulted and having videos and pictures of them taken and passed around to their school; now only one lives to share their story with the world.

This artifact plays on the emotions of the audience by sharing these personal stories of real survivors and the struggles that they have had to faced and continue to face due to the incident that occurred and how negatively it affected not only the two girls personally, but also how their communities reacted to their stories as well. This demonstrates pathos since Cohen and Shenk are trying to get the audience to relate to the feelings of those directly affected. The directors are channeling pathos in order to help the viewer better understand how fast someone can lose control, making them feel like they have nowhere else to turn ultimately thinking that taking their life is the only solution.



 Instead they showcase to the audience that suicide is in fact not the path to take and that many others have and are experiencing the same issues and they are finding a way to work through their pain in a more positive behavior instead of resorting to self-harm. Because regardless of how they feel at this certain point in time they will not always feel this way and what has happened to them does not have to determine the rest of their lives unless they allow it to. Once the girls in this video stepped forward and spoke up about their assaults whether people believed them or not it gave them back control and power. Which allows them to be able to take back authority of they life by giving them a say again. The directors wanted to express to the audience just how low these girls felt because of harassment that they both felt from their peers and community due to the unfair punishments that was deemed justifiable.

In society, sexual assaults are happening at an alarming rate yet most people are too afraid to bring this topic of conversation to the table. It is completely understandable as to why survivors of sexual assault are afraid to come forward about their abuse, but even schools are afraid to have educators teach youth about what sexual abuse is and how to prevent and stop it. This is because people are too uncomfortable when is comes to talking about uneasy topics of conversation, but this does not mean that prevention steps or ways to recognize sexual assault should not be taught at home and in school. The boys in this documentary were barely charged appropriately regarding their actions that took place the night of the assaults. They were able to go about their lives only having to serve community service for a few short months. If conversations were to open up more then perhaps less assaults would be likely to happen. This is because people would know how to intervene if they saw something happening or if people were more educated about consent, there would be no confusion on whether or not consent was given. Another conversation that our youth needs to hear is about how suicide is never the solution to any problems they are going through. No matter how hard you feel like you have things you need to keep pushing forward because many others before you have felt the same way and they are living proof that one day things will get better. Statistics were gather from Rainn, which states the “every 98 seconds another American is sexually assaulted”. In 2017 almost 10,000 individuals were sexually assaulted and about 13% or 1,300 of them have or will attempt suicide.

The directors exemplified ethos when they gathered interviews with those involved, family and friends of Audrie and Daisy, and specialist. This exercises ethos because they are trying to show the audience how credible one side perceives their character or character of another to be. They want you to decide on what story you believe to be the most truthful based on all the facts and testimonies they have laid out for you. It is clear that they want you to agree with the side on the two young girl since the directors let you know that the reason behind their motivations were because they felt as though these two cases were not properly investigated and they wanted to do these girls justice and get the word out for other survivors.

In this film you can see that the directors are trying to show the biasness that was presented in these cases, but especially in Daisy’s. They believe that the reason the young men were let off so easily is because of a family connection with a government official. Since it was a small town and the main assailant was the grandson of a Missouri diplomat the charges pressed against him were knocked down to minor charges to insure that his future would not be greatly affected because of this.

 

In Audrie’s case apart of the young boy’s punishment was having to partake in an interview with the directors and producers of this film since it was required as a part of their settlement.

 

In this film, they interview a police officer and the amount of bias he holds is intolerable. It is clear that he is casing blame on the victims instead of willing to accept the evidence and testimonies of those involved. He is not the only one that blamed the victims, many people would bring it on to social media and would poison the well by trashing their character by saying insulting things like how they were a slut and a liar. These false speculations circled through the town leading to a divide based on how they believed to be telling the truth or not.

Even though people were trying their hardest to get this the attention it needed in order to gain justness for the girls harmed at the end of the day more could not have been done due to the unfair conditions set in place due to the bias actions of law enforcement. The directors want to shine light down a dark road because they know they pain these girls are going through and they know that they are not the only ones so they are trying to spread the word and impact survivors in a positive way while encouraging others to make the right chooses whether that be intervening, knowing when to stop, or being accountable for your actions. They know that is will not also be the case though so there are other outlets for survivors to go to so they are aware that they are not in this fight alone, they have others encouraging them every step of the way to help guide them through this difficult time period.

Works Cited

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